

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 198338

FOLLOWING REPEAT ADDIS ABABA 3397 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
DJIBOUTI MOGADISCIO NAIROBI USNATO USCINCEUR AUG 3.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3397

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, ET, ASEC
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN SECURITY SITUATION HAS IMPROVED

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3339

SUMMARY. PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
(PMAC OR DIRG) HAS MAINTAINED ITS POLICY OF TIGHT
CONTROL OVER URBAN DWELLERS' ASSOCIATIONS ESTABLISHED
IN MAY 78 AND THUS HAS CURTAILED GREATLY THE WORST
ABUSES OF RED TERROR CAMPAIGN. THERE HAS BEEN
AN IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE AVERAGE
URBAN RESIDENT OVER NOV 77 - APRIL 78 PERIOD,
BUT THE PRESENT SITUATION DOES NOT REPRESENT AN
APPRECIABLE IMPROVEMENT SINCE A YEAR AGO. WHETHER
OR NOT THE DIRG ORDERS A MAJOR PRISONER RELEASE
IN SEPTEMBER AS RUMORED, MAY BE A GOOD INDICATION
OF THE DIRG'S SELF- CONFIDENCE AND MAY SERVE TO
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MAKE LIFE MORE TOLERABLE FOR MANY. END SUMMARY.

1. CURTAILMENT AND NEAR ELIMINATION OF THE
DIRG'S RED TERROR CAMPAIGN HAS CONTINUED TO PREVAIL
SINCE MAY 78. THIS WAS FORCEFULLY DEMONSTRATED
RECENTLY (JULY 28) WITH THE EXECUTION OF SIX URBAN
DWELLERS' ASSOCIATION (DEBELE) OFFICIALS AND ONE

OF THEIR ACCOMPLIES FOR "GROSS ABUSE OF POWER, INCLUDING EXTORTION, RAPE, EMBEZZLEMENT AND IN-HUMAN TREATMENT OF KEBELE PRISON INMATES." ETHIOPIAN MEDIA DESCRIBED THESE CRIMES AS "TANTAMOUNT TO CONSPIRACY TO CREATE A RIFT BETWEEN THE BROAD MASSES, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE KEBELES." ALTHOUGH DIRG MEASURES AGAINST THE KEBELE OFFICIALS WERE SUMMARILY ADMINISTERED, A RELIABLE SOURCE HAS REPORTED AN EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION WAS CONDUCTED BY DIRG SECURITY UNIT AND SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN TO ASSURE "PEACEFUL" ARREST OF THESE HEAVILY ARMED OFFICIALS.

2. SOURCE STATED THAT FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS OF KEBELE ABUSES ARE BEING PURSUED AND COULD RESULT IN MORE REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE BEING METED OUT. IT IS NOT YET KNOWN WHETHER KEBELE INVESTIGATIONS ARE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AGAINST MARXIST-LENINIST GROUPS OPPOSING DIRG RULE, OR IF THEY ARE SINCERE ATTEMPTS TO CORRECT PAST ABUSES AND REGAIN DEGREE OF POPULARITY AMONG URBAN DWELLERS. IN ANY CASE, IT IS CLEAR DIRG HAS REASSERTED ITS FULL AUTHORITY OVER A FORMERLY FREEWHEELING TYPE OF MASS ORGANIZATION (THE KEBELE) AND HAS GIVEN WARNING THAT IT IS PREPARED TO TAKE STRONG ACTION TO CORRECT AT LEAST THE MOST GROSS ABUSES.
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3. DIRG MEASURES TO CURTAIL SUMMARY KEBELE JUSTICE HAVE BEEN WELL-RECEIVED BY MAJORITY OF URBAN POPULATION. HAVING ELIMINATED THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP) URBAN TERRORIST THREAT, IT APPEARS KEBELES ARE ATTEMPTING TO EMPHASIZE THEIR SOCIAL-ECONOMIC ROLE RATHER THAN THEIR SECURITY ONE. EXAMPLES ARE: KEBELE COOPERATIVE SHOPS FOR GRAIN, SUGAR, SALT AND SOAP DISTRIBUTION, NEIGHBORHOOD ROAD REPAIR PROGRAMS AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION CLASSES.

4. DESPITE THESE POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS SINCE THE HEIGHT OF THE RED TERROR CAMPAIGN, DAILY POLITICAL ARRESTS CONTINUE AND RELIABLE SOURCES REPORT THAT POLITICAL EXECUTIONS ARE STILL OCCURRING, ALBEIT MORE CLANDESTINELY. PRISON CONDITIONS WITHIN KEBELES AND REGULAR POLICE AND MILITARY DETENTION AREAS HAVE NOT IMPROVED. PRISONS ARE STILL EXTREMELY CROWDED WITH INADEQUATE SANITARY FACILITIES. BEATINGS, WHILE SOMEWHAT REDUCED FROM NEAR-TORTURE PROCEDURES OF RED TERROR, ARE STILL

COMMON PRACTICE DURING ARRESTS AND INVESTIGATIONS,
AS THEY ARE IN BRAZIL, FOR EXAMPLE.

5. THUS, WHILE THERE HAS BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT IN
THE GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE AVERAGE URBAN
RESIDENT SINCE THE GROSS ABUSES OF RED TERROR
WERE CURTAILED IN MAY, THERE HAS NOT BEEN AN
APPRECIABLE IMPROVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS SINCE
ONE YEAR AGO. (IN APRIL 1977 THE DIRG ALSO EXE-
CUTED 5 KEBELE OFFICERS FOR SIMILAR ABUSES).
THER IS A WIDESPREAD RUMOR THAT THE DIRG WILL
RELEASE (ON THE 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION
SEPT 12), A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF POLITICAL
PRISONERS WHO WERE ARRESTED DURING THE FIRST TWO
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AND ONE-HALF YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION. IF THIS
OCCURS, IT WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THE DIRG NOW
FEELS SELF-CONFIDENT ENOUGH NOT TO FEAR THESE
INDIVIDUALS AND MAY NEED TO REHABILITATE
"REACTIONARY" POLITICAL PRISONERS WHOM IT MAY
DESPERATELY NEED NOW TO RUN THE CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACH.
IT WOULD ALSO BE THE FIRST MAJOR PRISONER RELEASE
IN OVER A YEAR.
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